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The double name Trent-Trieste, assumed as a symbol of Italy's aspirations to the Italian territories still under the dominion of Austria, has brought it about that, for the general public, Istria has been completely thrown in the shade, — Istria, that very noble country which for a multiplicity of reasons (historical, geographical, political, national) forms an integral part of the great Mother-land.

Perhaps on this account it is that, when Italy laid down the programme of the territories she reclaimed, on entering the war, interested parties succeeded in spreading the belief in foreign countries, that in aspiring to Istria, Italy was cherishing almost imperialistic aims; the fact being that, under every aspect, her claims to Istria are most legitimate and undeniable.

Apart from contiguity of territory, identity of language and customs and national feeling, Trieste and Istria form one homogeneous whole from the racial point of view. And every Italian

has always understood that, under the symbol of Trieste, was comprised Istria.

In fact, Trieste is the moral capital, so to say, of Istria. If the Austrian Government, in its own political interest, has by an artifice unfairly detached Trieste from Istria, making the former a city-and-province and the latter a province by itself, that action has not been able to destroy the identity of political and national interests which have ever united them in a common ideal. The daily economic relations and the constant influx of Istrians to Trieste, whose political and social life they have greatly enriched, have cemented their union more and more.

So much is this the case, that the Italians of Istria and Trieste have several times, specially in recent years, given expression to their wish to be united in one single province. But the Government has steadily opposed this unification, because it would have strengthened the Italian element, which was the last thing it wanted. This did not, however, prevent the two provinces from developing their political and national activities in perfect harmony; Trieste and Istria have united all their forces in defence of their threatened Italianism and for the attainment of aspirations held in common.

Turning now to the Province of Istria, we propose to show briefly the amount and the nature of the Italianism of the country; what she has done to show herself worthy of the name Italian; how she has, during a century of Austrian domination, resisted every effort to crush her; how she has successfully fought against every de-nationalizing force; how she has preserved undefiled the heritage of her Fathers down to this solemn hour when her long-awaited redemption is at hand.

I.

THE PAST.

It would be out of place to treat here, even in a summary way, the history of Istria from earliest times to our own day, richly instructive though the course of that history has been. But it will be useful, for the end we have in view, to refer to those important episodes which determined the development of the language, the culture, the civility, and the national sentiment of that country.

When Istria passed under the Romans it was joined to the tenth region of Italy, first called «*Venetia et Histria*», and later, «*Venetiae*»; it followed, up till half a century ago (1866), the fortunes of almost all the rest of Venezia. The northern boundary of Roman Istria reached to the Timavo, thus comprising also the city of Trieste (Tergeste).

Istria flourished most during the Roman epoch. Besides the numerous garrison left to de-

fend the frontier of Italy, families of high position, and the Imperial family itself, attracted by the mildness and salubrity of the climate and the fruitfulness of the soil, spent part of the year there. Much was done for the improvement of agriculture; several important industries sprang up, such as purple dyeing, while rich forests and stone-quarries furnished abundant materials for building operations. Many cities that still exist were then in a very flourishing state; such as, Tergeste, Aegida (Capodistria), Parentium, Albona Flanona, Piquentum (Pinguente), and Pola most of all. Clear proof of this is given by the numerous buildings of the period, still preserved, such as an Amphitheatre, Temple of Augustus, Arch of the Sergi (Porta Aurea) at Pola; two temples (one dedicated to Istria, the other to Fortune) near Rovigno; other two temples (one dedicated to Neptune, the other to Mars) at Parenzo; the temple of Cybele at Capodistria, and that of Juno at Cittanova. Istria must have risen to much splendour when Cassiodorus (538) could describe it as «a fortune for those in humble condition, a delight for the rich, so beautiful as to be one of the gems of Italy».

Istria continued Roman until the fall of the Western Empire. But if the Roman dominion

ceased then, the municipal government which Rome had given her remained firmly rooted, and was never plucked up even during the saddest passages of her history. In later centuries Istria suffered, like the rest of Italy, from the barbarian invasions, though in less degree than some other parts of the country. It passed also under the Graeco-Roman rule of Byzantium, and the Franco-Roman of Charlemagne (789, A. D.).

Under the Carlovingsians the feudal system penetrated Istria, where it had to lay its account with the free institutions of the still strong cities of the province. Dukes, Marquises, Bishops and Abbots ruled it in whole or in part. It was a long and bitter struggle between the natives and the strangers, between the Guelph cities and the Ghibelline baronies.

Later, Istria passed to the Patriarchs of Aquileia, and so continued for more than two centuries. It was during this period that, at a time when the Patriarch happened to be a Count of the German family of Eppenstein, part of eastern Istria, comprising several baronies, was formed into a County and assigned to a member of that family; that part alone, under the name of the County of Pisino, was seized by Austria. Thus the natural and political union of Istria was arbitrarily sundered.

But Venice, now risen to greatness, aspired to the conquest of Istria. After having by the desire of the Istrians themselves, and in the reciprocal interests of the two countries, exercised a protectorate for the ward of the sea, Venice at last, in 1420, succeeded in possessing herself of the Marquisate, the larger and most important half of Istria. Under Venice Istria rose to new and prosperous life; her civilization, never quite lulled to sleep through centuries of such heterogeneous government, revived; her life took the pressure of that of Venice in speech, in custom and observance, and she followed with devoted affection the fortunes of Venice. On the fall of the Venetian Republic, Napoleon, by the peace of Campo Formio (October 17th, 1797), ceded Istria, along with other Italian provinces, to Austria who, after a re-occupation by the Franco-Venetians who united Istria to the Italic Kingdom, received it back again in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna.

Even in the Middle Age, when the country was in a less flourishing condition, important buildings rose in Istria. Ravenna, the Rome of those days, influenced Istrian art. In the VIth century, while Cittanova and Pola were constructing their basilicas, Parenzo raised on the ruins of former churches the Basilica Euphra-

siana, a jewel of art that still exists in all its splendour. Another basilica, still preserved, rose at Muggia Vecchia. Later the influence of Venice made itself felt in all the forms taken by Istrian art. The Palaces of the Podestà, and other public buildings, the gates of the cities, the arches, the Palaces of the nobility, even the most humble dwellings, show the characteristics of Venetian art.

With good reason did Giuseppe Caprin, the diligent and learned inquirer into the ancient glories of Istria, place on the fore-front of the magisterial work in which he called to life the twenty centuries of Italian history and art in the province, the title, — like to a noble escutcheon, — « Istria Nobilissima ».

But if the existing monuments and the glorious remains from the past, witness indisputably to the Latinism and Italianism of Istria, no less weighty proof to the same effect is furnished through the generations in the field of learning.

Without going very far back, it may be useful to recall the names of some Istrians of more recent times who, in Science, in Letters, in the Arts, in War, in Civil and Ecclesiastical offices, have kept in honour the Italian good name of Istria, bearing witness to her civility and culture.

Citing only the most important names, we recall Pier Paolo Vergerio, the elder, (XVth cent.), Philosopher, Historian, Jurisconsult; Pier Paolo Vergerio, the younger, (XVIth cent.), apostate Bishop and Professor at Padua, a man of profound learning; Girolamo Muzio (XVIth cent.), called «the hammer of the heretics», Poet, Historian, Moralist, who left various important works; S. Santorio (XVIIth cent.), renowned physician, Professor at Padua; Petronio Caldana (XVIIth cent.), man of Letters and Philosopher, called to the French court for his great gifts, where he lived for long; Gian Rinaldo Carli (XVIIIth cent.), versed in every branch of knowledge, brilliant economist, one of the most learned men of his century; Francesco Patrizio, Historian and Philosopher; and so on, and so on, down to the more recent names: Besenghi degli Ughi, Michele Fachinetti, Francesco and Carlo Combi, not to mention many others now living.

In Art, to name only the most illustrious, Vettore and Benedetto Carpaccio (XVth-XVIth cents.), of whom the former especially rose to great fame, leaving marvellous pictures, a goodly number of which are preserved in Istria and at Venice; Bernardo da Parenzo, or Parentino (XVIth cent.), master and almost originator of decorative art; Giovanni Valle (XVIIIth cent.), Artist-Designer,

who left valuable works in many Italian cities; among architects and sculptors, Fra Sebastiano da Rovigno, a famed carver in wood and inlaid work; among musicians Giuseppe Tartini (XVIIIth cent.), the wizard of the violin, composer of such fame that he was often called to the courts of Paris and London.

The Church, too, received from Istria many men famed for learning and piety. Among various Saints, there is St. Massimiano, Arch-Bishop of Ravenna (VIth cent.); very numerous are the Istrian Bishops who, not only in the province, occupied episcopal seats of high importance, as: Gennaro da Pola, Patriarch of Aquileia, Cristoforo da Pola, Patriarch of Grado, Fra Lodovico Trevisani (XVth cent.), one of the ablest theologians of his century, Bishop of Forlì; Elio Antonio (XVIth cent.), Patriarch of Jerusalem and afterwards Vicar of the Basilica Vaticana.

There were also names illustrious in the profession of arms: Gavardo II (XVIth cent.), commander of the galley of Istria at the siege of Candia, the first to take by assault a gate of the city; Santo Gavardo (XVIth cent.), distinguished Captain in the service of Lodovico, King of Naples; and that Biagio Giuliani who, having to defend the fortress of S. Teodoro at Candia against the Turks in 1645, set fire to the powder-

magazine, to avoid falling into the hands of the enemy, so burying friends and foes alike, himself included, under the ruins. Many others one might mention from noble Istrian families, — the Gravi, the Tarsia, the Tacco, the Verzi, the Negri, the Scampicchio, — who covered themselves with glory and renown in the service of the Republic of Venice.

A modest band, after all, in the galaxy of genius that is the glory of Italy; but Istria may take a just pride in these her sons, who honoured her by their virtues and affirmed in every age her Italian spirit.

II.

THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE.

If History have any worth, in the revaluation of all ideas and principles that is going on under our eyes, it stands an irrefutable witness of the Italianism of Istria.

The Slavs (we can say with certainty) first made their appearance in the IXth century, as is proved by a document of the highest importance preserved in the Marciàn Codex at Venice. At the beginning of that century, some Slav tribes, perhaps from the neighbouring Carniola, gradually filtered through the north-eastern boundary of the province, the poorest part and most scantily inhabited; from there they made frequent incursions into the neighbouring territory, to the great damage of the Istrians' possessions. The Istrians laid a complaint before Duke Giovanni, who then governed the province under Charlemagne. In presence of the « missi dominici » (Im-

perial Inspectors) come to visit the province, at a solemn meeting held in 804, known as the « Placito del Risano » or « Placito di Carlo Magno », the Duke listened to the complaints of the Istrians, and thus gave them answer:—

« Since you complain of the Slavs, let us go to the places where they reside, and let us see where they can stay without loss to you. If afterwards they cause damage to the fields, the woods, or any other thing, let us hunt them forth. Or, if that please you better, let us move them to desert places where they can be of use ».

Further penetrations of the Slavs (Morlacchi and Croats) and other races, took place in the XIth and XIIth centuries, and more especially in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries, when the people of Istria, exhausted by the long wars they had supported and by the pestilences that caused such ravages in those days, had not sufficient men to till the ground. But it is to be noted, that this was never the penetration of a people able to assert their own individuality, and to put their own spiritual imprint on the country, but only diverse tribes of various origin, without any political unity.

Indeed, up till forty years ago Istria had never known a real struggle of races. The Slav colonists dwelling in the province had up till then lived

in harmony with the Italians. Their various forms of speech, — some of the Slav dialects differ widely from others, — were never strong enough to penetrate the life of the country, and were only used familiarly among themselves. Further, the superior culture of the Italians; the constant rubbing shoulders with the urban population, with whom there were continual economic relations, thus causing the need of knowing the language; the tendency of the rural Slav population, as the chief cities kept growing rapidly, to seek better-paid work in the larger Italian centres; — all these things were as a strong magnet, drawing the Slav population toward the Italian element.

About 1870 the first serious signs of a Slav movement could be noted in Istria. It was promoted, not so much by a real sentiment of nationality, at least among the masses, nor by a spirit of rebellion, for which there was no justification, but rather by the intervention of an extraneous factor which cleverly exploited the situation for its own ends.

At that time the Austrian Government, preoccupied by the expansion of Italy (the recent war having carried the boundaries of the Kingdom to Udri, east of Aquileia), and alarmed at the recoil of this fact, which had aroused the slumbering hopes of the Italians still « unredeemed », thought

the moment had arrived to take strong measures against the rising national sentiment, and to deface the two-thousand-years imprint of Latinism which formed Italy's clearest title-deed to those territories. And since a previous attempt at Germanisation had entirely failed, chiefly through lack of any substratum in the country, Austria thought of trying Slavisation this time, as she could dispose of a Slav population who could be stirred up against the Italians.

It would be very instructive and interesting to follow all the phases of the bitter and unequal struggle for the last forty years (noting its most important episodes), which at last became a struggle to the death for the Italians, contending for their political and national existence. But to do this would take too much time, and carry us beyond our scope; we shall only note those facts which throw the clearest light on the partisan attitude of the Austrian Government, decisively hostile to the Italian element.

At the beginning of the Slavisation movement, for lack of other intellectual elements to lead it, the Government had recourse to the clergy gradually reinforced by priests brought from other provinces, who by degrees supplanted the Italian priests. This was the first phase in the development of the programme, a phase that did not rai-

se much clamour, but was none the less effective for that. In fact anyone who knows the authority and influence enjoyed by the Austrian clergy who, besides their spiritual duties, had civil powers, — the registration of births, marriages and deaths, and various other matters connected with the population being in their hands, — and who knows the support given them by the Government whose faithful henchmen they were, can easily understand the zeal and efficiency with which they discharged the duty entrusted to them, specially among an almost primitive people that believed blindly all the priests told them.

The priests formed the vanguard of the attack; the school-teachers were next moved forward; they had become numerous with the expansion of the Slav school-system. The teachers captained the Slav movement, which was openly favoured by the Government; Church and School thus became centres of propaganda.

Nor were the means to finance the movement lacking, as time went on; it came in a generous stream from the Slav countries and from the Government itself.

Then began the struggle for administrative power. Emboldened by their first electoral successes in certain country communes where the population was mixed, the Slav party thought

they would soon dominate the country: the fanaticism of the leaders knew no limits. The elections, to which the faithful were urged forward as to a crusade, followed each other with ever growing violence. From the systematic and barbarous cutting of the vines, and other reprisals against opponents, the Slav party proceeded to armed violence; the battle-cry was, « Into the sea with the Italians », as one of the leaders did not hesitate to say at a memorable sitting of the Provincial Diet. It was an exasperating struggle, absorbing energies which could have been employed more fruitfully, but the Italians resisted with the loftiest spirit of sacrifice, comforted by the support of a part of the Slav population itself, who disapproved of the movement and dissociated themselves completely from it, anxious to maintain the former good relations with the Italians, which had existed up to that time, to the mutual advantage of both parties.

The Government understood that an effort in this one line (that of dominating the elections) would be useless, given the tenacious resistance of the Italians, who always received the support of the great majority; so it moved along another line of attack, to weaken the Italian position and seriously prejudice the Italian character of the country.

Up to forty years ago the Italian language was, we may well say, the only language for general intercourse, used by the Slavs themselves, with the rarest exceptions, in all the relations of social life. Already by a Royal Patent (April 24th, 1815) Austria had recognised the exclusive use of Italian in the law-courts of Istria; not only so, but Italian had become the *sole* language for conducting business in all the Government Offices, Political, Judicial, and Administrative; — *a most solemn official acknowledgment of the Italianism of the country.*

To further its programme of de-nationalization, it was the interest of the Government that this state of things should be changed in favour of the Slavs and to the loss of the Italians. So in secret, without any legal dispositions which would have raised a dust, it allowed bi-lingualism, even tri-lingualism, to penetrate gradually all the Government Offices.

This was an act of supreme injustice.

As a matter of fact, owing to the superior development of the Italian language, almost universally known in Istria, as compared with the various Slav dialects there in use, the new arrangement met no real want. And up to that time this had been recognised, as we have seen, by the Austrian Government itself! It was not

therefore an innovation called for by the needs or the degree of culture possessed by the Slav population, nor one of general utility; the innovation was solely made to satisfy the pretensions of a few interested agitators, and above all, it was adopted as a most efficacious weapon for destroying the Italian character of the country.

The blow was a severe one and had the most baneful consequences for the Italians. To say nothing of the state of inferiority to which they were at once reduced, given their ignorance of the Slav tongues which hitherto they had had no use for, they at once found it difficult (at times impossible) to handle directly their own affairs in the Government Offices; this was specially the case in Judicial proceedings based on the immediate and oral treatment of the case in hand: this «reform» went hard for the Italians. They protested, in every possible way and by every possible means, against this arbitrary act of the Austrian Government. The campaign started by the Italians against the «Bi-lingual Door-Plates» (over Govt. offices), the outward symbol of the bi-lingual system, culminated in a popular rising at Pirano, where the crowd tore down the Door-Plate as soon as it had been affixed; it was then re-affixed and guarded with drawn bayonets;

proof of the exasperation of the Italians against the new act of oppression.

Of this state of feeling the Provincial Diet became the mouth-piece, protesting solemnly at its session of January, 1895. When the Government Commissary rose to offer the customary greeting to the Diet, at the opening sitting, the Italian majority hindered him from speaking, and shouted: « Silence! We don't want greetings, we want justice; promises are not enough ». So saying, and vehemently applauded by the public who crowded the gallery, the Italians left the hall in a body, thus bringing the sitting to an end. At the following sitting the leader of the majority made a strong protest, and was followed by several deputies who spoke in the same sense.

But all protests were vain; the new arrangements were enforced. The Government Offices, specially the Judicial ones, were gradually converted into a perfect Babel, where each man spoke in the language that best suited himself, whether the opposite party understood him or not. Even the public valuation roll on which loans were based, became un-usable by the Italians, owing to the diversity of tongues in which the entries were made.

But if this was the most serious consequence of the innovation, it was not the only one. The

new linguistic arrangement made it needful to employ Slav officials, higher and lower, who had to be sought from outside the province, as there was a lack within its borders. Italian Officials who took pains to learn Slav, found their position nothing bettered by that; many threw up their posts in disgust, unable to swallow the condition of inferiority to which they were reduced, without any future prospects.

On the other hand, as though following the word of command, Advocates and other Professional men came into the province like a set rain, to profit by this new source of gain; following them came the Slav Banks, which nestled down chiefly at Trieste. And behind these came a vast army of employés, workmen, railway-men, police, custom officers, prison-warders, door-keepers, — all brought from the Slav provinces. These gentry soon gave themselves the airs of masters, posing as conquerors, sure of the support of Austria, who studied to buttress their position in every way. Thus in a few years the political, economic and social life of the country was turned upside down.

In Istria the more important cities were made special objects of attack. Having no cities of their own, the Slavs tried to insinuate themselves into those of the Italians. At first they acted as guests,

respectful of the Italian character of the country that gave them hospitality; later, as their numbers increased, they brought forward pretended national rights in despite of the Italianism of the country.

Austria, rubbing her hands over this successful penetration of cities that had always been Italian, always rebellious to seduction and flattery, seconded it by all possible means. Where her functionaries had been Italian she sought now to put in their stead, especially in the lower offices, Slavs brought in great part from beyond the mountains. To give the movement a certain importance to lookers-on abroad, she set up several Societies whose activities did not amount to much, but served to underline the existence of Slavs in Italian centres.

The Slav penetration was more intense than anywhere else at Pola, the most populous city of the province, where it could easily be seconded by the Government. Besides bringing Slav employés and functionaries there for Government offices, more than a thousand Italian workmen were gradually removed from the Arsenal; these men were compelled to move off with their families and seek work in other dock-yards; they were replaced by workmen of other nationalities. Later on, between the years 1906 and 1908, as

more hands were needed for the enlargement of the Arsenal, 3000 Bosnian and Croat workmen were imported who established themselves at Pola with their families and, after a year's residence, became electors in that commune; — a prompt method indeed for altering the ethnic conditions of a country.

Recently a railway line was constructed from Trieste to Parenzo through a district inhabited almost exclusively by Italians, where stopping-places were cities and towns purely Italian. Very large sums for the building of this line had been subscribed, almost exclusively by Italians, as they had the greatest interest in it. Austria arranged that all the notices and advertisements along the line, at the stations, in the carriages, should be in four languages: German, Italian, Slovene and Croat, — giving, as for very shame, the second place to Italian, after the official language of the State, — but on the name-boards of the Stations, in addition to the Italian name, in use for centuries, they added a Slav appellative recently introduced by propagandists, which appellative was then, in defiance of all historic truth, printed in the official list of place-names of the country. By this expedient, contemptible in itself but effective by the significance it would acquire through time and official sanction, they hoped

perhaps (besides contenting the Slavs and disgusting the Italians) to deceive the traveller as to the nationality of the country, whose real sentiments he would not have the time to acquaint himself with.

Naturally the language question came up also in the Diet of the province, where it raised frequent and bitter conflicts. At the Diet of Istria the proceedings had always been conducted in Italian. In the constitutive session of 1861 the Diet had settled this without the Government offering any opposition; indeed the Government then, and on subsequent occasions, had to recognise Italian as the official language. Only later, when the Slav deputies became numerous, they, not content with the fair language concessions made them by the Italians, pretended to equal treatment; this move was a purely political one, it corresponded to no real need. In fact, as has been said already, while the Slavs of Istria (and how much more, then, the deputies), commonly know and use Italian, the Italians know neither Slovene nor Croat. Given this condition of things, apart altogether from political considerations, the use of one language known to all in which to conduct the proceedings, was a necessity. For the rest one had only to follow the example of Vienna, where, because of the impossibility of allowing the use

of all the languages spoken in the Monarchy, the recognised language for the conduct of the proceedings was German.

With all this let no one think that the sole use of Italian at the Diet prevented the Slav deputies from attending properly to the interests of their constituents, and from using their own language as far as was possible. Besides the speeches in Italian, —and those who had a care for their own interests spoke in it! — all the acts, questions, motions which these deputies presented in Slav, were received and discussed in an Italian version, the only one understood by all the deputies. But the complaisant Austrian Government, which had set out to undermine the Italian character of the Diet, went further. Forgetful of previous and repeated acknowledgments of Italian as the official language, it began in recent times to use the Slav language in its greeting to the Diet and in answer to interpellations from Slav deputies.

But this was only the beginning of a vaster plan. Austria wished to carry the use of two languages into this Palladium of the Italianism of the province. In fact, when the Italian deputies, interpreting the discontent which the linguistic innovations in the Government offices had caused, wished it entered on the Standing-Orders

of the Diet (in the Session of 1895) that all proceedings were to be conducted in Italian as the official language, — that is wished to have legalised a use that had existed for more than thirty years, that is, as long as the Diet itself had existed, — the Government, for reply, closed the Diet. The Italians, however, did not own themselves beaten. The intentions of the Government to their prejudice were too evident. Also when the Government, in connection with the electoral reform of 1908, exerted great pressure to carry out its intent, the Italian deputies, while making every possible linguistic concession to the Slav minority, held firmly to Italian as the official language.

The clergy co-operated actively and unwearyingly in the work of de-nationalization. It began in the country churches, where prayers began to be said and hymns to be sung in the Slav language, it was even used at high mass; and this notwithstanding the protests of the Italian population and of the Slavs themselves, to whom the innovation was repugnant. But this only masked the main attack. Under the pretext of an old privilege accorded by the Church to the Slav peoples in the days of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, a propaganda was made for the use of the Galgoli-

thic liturgy and of the Cyrilline characters in the churches of Istria.

This was more than a linguistic reform: it was an approach to Greek Orthodoxy. In fact, a fanatic Croat agitator, the priest Iakic, wrote at that time as follows in his journal for propaganda, « Il Diritto Croato » (The Croat Rights), — written, you see, in Italian: otherwise, who would have understood him? —:

« The link that binds the Russians to the other Slav peoples is Greek Orthodoxy. We ought to disentangle ourselves from Romanism and the Latin Church. All the Slavs ought to have the same Shepherd ».

Such things the most Catholic Austria permitted to be said and done, through hatred of the Italians, and to de-nationalize the country.

Now, apart from politics and nationality and the gravity of the religious question in itself, it is an incontestable fact that the asserted right or privilege was never granted to the Slavs of Istria: several Istrian men of learning have triumphantly proved this.

And as the Government, despite repeated remonstrances, took no pains to bridle a propaganda which, besides threatening the Latinism of the Church, cut into the national question, from Istria

and Trieste vibrant memorials of protest were sent to the Holy See, that it might intervene with its authority. The Holy See, however, while recognising that only those churches could claim that right or privilege, who could prove an uninterrupted use for the last forty years, — which was equivalent to recognising that no church of Istria could boast that right, — was unwilling or unable to make its decision respected.

Also in another field of activity the Slav priests carried on an anti-Italian policy. By Austrian law, as we have seen, the office of registration of births, marriages, etc., for Catholics, is entrusted to the clergy. The Slav priests profited from this to alter the manner of writing names, arbitrarily making Italian names appear as Slav, causing offence and possibly prejudicing documents on which civil rights are based. This conduct, too, met with no opposition from the Government, to whom complaints were often sent, and whose duty it was to protect the honest conduct of such an important public office.

III.

**THE PRESENT ELECTORAL CHARACTER
OF THE POLITICAL
AND ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES.**

Also from an examination of the representative institutions of the province, the political features and, what is more to our present purpose, the national features of Istria appear with clearest evidence. The proof these afford is the more weighty, when one remembers that the Austrian Government, always averse to the Italians, has opposed by every means at its disposal their election successes, and these successes, therefore, are due solely to the political, economic, and national worth of the Italians. Only recalling in passing that, in the first years of the constitutional era, all the Istrian deputies to Parliament, and almost all the deputies to the provincial Diet, were Italians, we wish to limit our exposition to more recent times. Up to the year 1907, when

universal suffrage was introduced, the Austrian system for parliamentary elections was based on a representation of interests. Only in 1897 there was introduced, alongside the four existing colleges, a fifth college on the basis of universal suffrage. In consequence of this reform, Istria, which till then had sent four deputies to Parliament, had the right to send a fifth, chosen by the whole province, which formed one electoral college for that end. Well then: in the general elections for Parliament in 1901, the Italians gained *four seats*, — *including that of the college where there was universal suffrage, and which embraced the entire province*, — while the Slavs gained a single seat, that of the eastern rural communes.

Anyone can see the deep significance of this repeated electoral success of the Italians in a vote by universal suffrage of the whole province. It was a real national plebiscite that, in two successive trials, at the distance of four years, issued in favour of the Italians. Assuredly the Austrian Government understood the value of this result, attained in spite of the support it had given in recent years to the Slav movement; it saw the impressive increase in the number of Italian deputies sent to represent Istria in the Parliament

of Vienna. The electoral reform of 1907 gave them the opportunity to curb their feared preponderance. Indeed the Government proposal for universal suffrage was as iniquitous a measure as could have been thought out to injure the Italians of Istria. Without taking account of the facts that the Italians were the heaviest tax-payers and the most cultured section of the community, and that the industrial centres were in their possession, — facts that were fully considered when forming the electoral colleges in other provinces, — everything was based on the complaisant statistics. The province was divided into two parts, eastern and western, — the former chiefly occupied by Slavs, the latter almost exclusively by Italians; three colleges were assigned to the eastern part, two to the western. To succeed in this electoral alchemy, another grave injustice was committed. The three eastern colleges had an average of 50,000 inhabitants each, as they all three belonged to country districts; of the two Italian colleges, the first (comprising the most important cities and industrial centres of northern Istria) had about 80,000 inhabitants; the second, comprising the important and populous city of Pola (which alone had a right to at least one deputy) had fully 87,000 inhabitants.

In other more important provinces there were country colleges that contained a much larger population, and there were city colleges (specially German) with a population of only 12,000 inhabitants. Not only, then, was the number of the deputies not increased, as was the case in all the other provinces, but in parcelling out the colleges the one care was to favour the Slavs and damage the Italians.

The Italians rebelled at this new injustice, and, since it was impossible to obtain redress from Government or the parliamentary parties, the Italian deputies had recourse to the extreme measure of obstruction within the parliamentary Commission charged with giving the proposal legal form. Their firm attitude induced the Commission to raise the number of colleges assigned to the Italians to three; but they retained the absurd method of dividing districts; — a juster method would have given far different results.

Nor had the Italians a less significant position in the provincial Diet, the autonomous body entrusted with large legislative powers for the administration of the province. As we have said, at its institution and for long years after, nearly all its thirty members were Italians; Italian was always the deputy nominated by the Emperor as

Captain of the province, — that is, President of the Diet and head of the administration. Later, as the Slav national movement got wind in its sails, the number of Slav deputies rose to nine; thus up till 1908 the Diet was composed of 27 Italians and 9 Slavs, besides the three bishops of Trieste-Capodistria, Parenzo and Veglia, members *ex officio*. Such was the situation when the Government, taking occasion from an extension of the suffrage proposed by the Diet itself in analogy with the universal suffrage granted for parliamentary elections, forced by its direct initiative a general increase in the number of the colleges, and a redistribution of the mandates, with the precise object of weakening the position of the Italians. We say deliberately «forced», for had it been only a question of setting up a new college with universal suffrage, while widening the suffrage in the other colleges, (as was being done in the other provinces of the Empire), the reform would have been justified by the requirements of the new time and would not have altered the existing proportion between Italians and Slavs in the provincial representation. But the Government, though fixing the general principle of maintaining the existing colleges as an electoral base *plus* a new college based on universal suf-

frage, imposed a recasting of the existing colleges, to secure the Slavs (by a most artificial division of districts) a larger representation within the Diet.

The labours of the Commission were long drawn out, often interrupted by the opposition of the Italians, but at last the Government, while securing notable favours for the Slavs, *had to acknowledge that the majority belonged by right to the Italians*, seeing that among them all the factors on which the electoral system was based were found in greater strength.

Not contented, however, with recognising this fact, as in duty bound, the Government placed such restrictions on the rights of the majority as to make their exercise an illusion. The Italians resisted as long as they could to violence and threats, but later, fearing that worse might happen, they thought best to yield somewhat; there resulted the reform of the provincial elections in 1908 which, if it confirmed the Italian majority in the Diet, made any useful activity of that body impossible through the growingly exorbitant claims of the Slavs, backed by Austria. It is true that, at the first election under the new system, the Italians gained one of the colleges of Pola, artificially created for the Slavs, although these

last had the support of the Navy vote; and perhaps other similar cases would have occurred in course of time, but the fact remains that the Government has also used this means to weaken the position and influence of the Italians in the lawful representation of the province.

At the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, where all sections of the commercial and industrial interest of the whole province took part in the elections, *all* the Counsellors had always been Italians. This could not be otherwise in a country where the commerce and small industries were in great part in Italian hands, while the great industries, the Banks, the steamship companies, the shipping, the fisheries were almost exclusively in their hands.

And what shall we say of the municipalities of the cities and larger towns of Istria, those rocks of Italianism, which have raised their heads over all the waves of adversity through the centuries? With exception of some minor communes, which were gained in recent days by the Slavs (not by the votes of the inhabitants of urban centres, which were and are Italian, but by the preponderating weight of the country electors), the other cities and towns had always, and still have, Italian representatives.

Pola is a characteristic case of the extremes to which the Austrian Government could go in order to weaken the political position of the Italians. For several years up to 1905, in consequence of a compromise with the citizen electors, given the increasing importance of the Navy in that town, a third of the municipal representation, that is, the rich electors and the officials, was reserved for Navy candidates, who, however, formally pledged themselves to respect the Italianism of the town. This compromise was observed by both parties; but later when, through the large Slav immigration, the Government thought the moment had arrived to join battle with the Italians, the compromise was broken. In 1907 the Navy, in alliance with the Slavs, tried to mount into power.

The struggle was bitter. The Navy, most powerful at Pola through its numerous officials and its vast influence in the business world, used every weapon to carry the day; tampering with electoral lists (the Government being accomplice), acts of violence against Italian electors, even an imaginary landing of Officers who occupied imaginary residences and exercised their right to vote. In spite of all, the Italians carried all their candidates in all the three electoral bodies. It was

a bolt from the blue. In revenge, the Navy boycotted all the Italians with whom they had had business relations, *publishing a list of their names*, to the great damage of many citizens; it also laid on the commune new and very burdensome contracts for the supply of water, of gas, of electric light; it even built its own slaughter-house, thus depriving the commune illegally of one source of income, the slaughter-tax.

The Italians, however, did not lose heart, and in the parliamentary elections of the same year and the elections to the Diet in 1908, defeated afresh the same coalition. The Government did not lay down its arms after this defeat, and, unable to overcome the resistance of the Italians of Pola in fair fight, had recourse to violence. It dissolved the municipal body, replacing it by an administrative Junta where the Navy and the Slavs were alone represented, in glaring opposition to the lawfully expressed will of the electors. And to stablish a reign of terror, set up a municipal police with functionaries strange to the town, Slavs for the most part; a Commissariat of political police was also set up, whose jurisdiction reached even to the neighbouring town of Dignano.

But all this was not enough to satisfy them. They must have another electoral « reform », making an exceptional law for Pola, by which, while the Italians retained their numerical majority, seats were secured by various tricks and dodges, for the Navy and the Slavs. This « reform » was specially felt in the nomination of the Podestà and the communal Deputation; the nomination of the Podestà had to receive the Imperial confirmation, and every decision of a financial nature had to be approved by the Government. In a word, it was a clear weakening of the communal autonomy under sanction of the laws; so that with good reason this exceptional law imposed on the city of Pola was called « the halter law ».

We see then that, while the position of the Italians in politics and administration has recently worsened, they have nevertheless maintained their supremacy in both fields. The weakening of the Italian position in Istria in favour of the Slavs, was not the result of a fair party combat on equal conditions; it was organised spoliation, and one more proof to what extremes the boasted liberality of Austria can go when it has determined to oppress, if possible to suppress, a small people subjected to its paternal rule.

IV.

IN THE SCHOOLS.

For long years Austria cared little for public instruction in Istria. Only when the schools came to be administered by the provincial authorities, was there any marked progress, specially in elementary education. But Istria received scanty financial aid from the State, in marked contrast to the generosity shown to the Slav schools in Dalmatia, and to the German schools in the Trentino; all the burden, always growing with growing needs, had to be borne by provincial funds not too abundant. Only recently did Government seem to interest itself in public instruction in Istria, but, as we shall see, simply in order to stay the progress of Italian schools and favour that of the Slav schools: this was an integral part of its programme of de-nationalization. Given the linguistic conditions of Istria, and the absolute pre-

dominance of Italian, the only language needed for daily use, it will be easily understood how, in the past, nearly all the elementary schools were Italian. If in some places in the interior it was found expedient to open a Slav school, the teaching of Italian had always a first place in it. Things changed little by little. The Slav schools, as one of the most effective means of propaganda, had all the Government support. Wherever a real or artificial majority could be established, there a Slav school was set down, supported, where necessary, by special Government grants, a generosity never extended to the Italian schools. Thus numerous Slav schools arose in the last score of years, specially in the interior of the province, with a root-and-branch national programme; in many Italian was not obligatory. Given the linguistic needs of Istria, the innovation was opposed even by the Slavs, who lost the chance of acquiring in school the language (Italian) of which they had the greatest need. It rained protests. Government, fully convinced of the excellence of its system, did not budge. The provincial Junta intervened when and where it could (specially if there were an Italian minority to protect), to aid the remonstrants, and often succeeded in maintaining, alongside of the Slav school (backed by

the Government), the Italian school, which flourished equally with, or even more than, the former, despite all difficulties.

But this work of national defence was beyond the economic strength of the province; here the Scholastic Association (*Lega Nazionale*) came to the rescue. In a few years, at all the most threatened points where Italian minorities requested it, Italian schools arose. These requests were so numerous that, partly through State obstruction and partly for lack of means, many could not be met. To the good work of the *Lega Nazionale* the Slavs opposed a scholastic society of their own, the *Cirillo e Metodio*, which was powerfully helped by the Slav countries of the Monarchy, specially by Croatia, and so was able to develop great activity: beside the school of the Lega there often arose a Slav school. And yet the knowledge and use of Italian is more diffused among the Slavs than in the past, when the social life and especially the economic life of the province (and at Trieste), very much below its present development, did not draw the rural Slav population with such an attractive force.

With still greater reason, the higher schools in Istria were, till recently, Italian. The Slavs rarely went on to these schools, and the few who did could listen with profit to Italian lessons. The

Government had the disposition of two older schools for higher instruction, but did not think any other language called for in teaching than Italian; and this was the feeling and the desire of the country also. In 1868 an agitation was begun, chiefly by some deputies from Carniola, to have Slav introduced. In reply to this move, the provincial Junta of Istria memorialized the Minister of Public Instruction in favour of retaining Italian as the one teaching-language in the higher schools of Istria; similar memorials were sent by 106 out of the 128 communes which then composed the province; that is, more than three-fourths of the population favoured the retention of Italian. The few communes of a contrary opinion, were in the mountain districts bordering on the neighbouring provinces (Slovenes and Croats); communes that rarely sent any lad to study at the higher schools.

But this did not lead Austria to favour the Italian schools of Istria; she has always treated that country as a Cinderella. Of the two higher schools, the Lyceum at Capodistria (an old city foundation) and the Technical Institute at Pirano, the latter, as though one too much, was closed after 1870. It is no thanks to the Government if flourishing higher schools now exist at Pola, at

Pisino, at Rovigno: these were built at the expense of the communes and the province.

Only when it is a question of setting up Slav schools is the Government ready to loose the purse-strings. So there rose at Pola a lyceum and a technical school where the instruction was given in German; and in 1899 a Croat gymnasium was erected (the better to show its real purpose) in an Italian city, Pisino. We shall not discuss the propriety, specially in the case of the last mentioned school, of such activity, considering the level of culture of the Slav population of Istria. Certain it is, that the attendance at these schools, never very encouraging, was kept up by diverse expedients; but one cannot help remarking on the conduct of a Government that, for the families of a few of its fonctionnaires come in from abroad, sets up two higher schools at Pola in the German language, and grants the Slavs, hardly yet entered on the intellectual life, a lyceum; while the Italians are left to care for their own higher culture. Against the choice of Pisino as the seat of a Croat gymnasium, the Italians of all the now « redeemed » provinces protested at an important meeting held at Trieste at which political and administrative representatives were present; but in vain. The Austrian Government neither could nor would disoblige its new friends, nor for its

own part was it prepared to renounce this new weapon of de-nationalization. It was not to be moved.

Still more clearly may Austria's policy be seen in connection with the University question. Although there are more than 400 Italian students, a goodly number of whom are Istrians, the Government has never been willing to grant them an Italian University, though they have insistently demanded it for fifty years. Under many difficulties and to the prejudice of their studies, guests barely tolerated, the Italians have had to attend German Universities. And while the few Slav students who have in later years given themselves to higher studies, are allowed to frequent the Croat University of Zagabria, whose courses are accepted for degrees in their own country, similar privileges have always been denied to Italian students in regard to the Italian Universities. We cannot here enter on the long struggle of the Italians for their rights in this matter; we only remark how the Istrians took part in it, by resolutions of the provincial Diet and of the Municipal Representatives, and by numerous meetings of the people. It was a long and dolorous Odyssey, which culminated in the bloody encounters of Wilten, of Vienna, of Gratz, too recent and well-known for us to dwell upon. The Government,

entrenching itself behind the opposition of the other nationalities, turned the cultural question into a political one. Since the Germans did not want it in the Trentino, since the Slavs did not want it in Istria, and both Germans and Slavs did not want it at Trieste, — as though they were the absolute masters of the earth, — the Government felt bound to give weight to these objections and refused the Italian University. Strange scruples these for a Government that had imposed on the Italian city of Pisino a Croat gymnasium, despite Italian opposition, and set up Slav schools where it pleased, even against the lawfully expressed wishes of those most interested!

In truth the real reason was very different. Austria well understood that the grant of a University would have been the recognition of the high culture of a people that, according to the Austrian programme, should slowly disappear from the stage of history. With traditional blindness Austria did not see that the long agitation of the University question by the Italians was of itself incontestable proof of their highly developed civility, and that it would stir up their brethren of the Peninsula to work for their re-union with the Mother-land.

V.

THE POLITICAL FEELING.

The Istrians fought, not only for the defence of their national entity, but also to preserve their country for a future union with Italy. Austria well understood this, and her failure to defeat this irredentism embittered her, and sharpened her repressive measures. Prince Hohenlohe, when he took up his Governorship at Trieste, hoped to make his Master's regime more popular; he abounded in courtesies to the Italians, seeking to approach their leaders and inviting them to his official banquets; he suppressed a Government subvention to a « Society of Austrian Patriots »; at Istria, on his first visit to open the Diet, he lost no opportunity of expressing his sympathies for the Italians. He must have soon found that he was labouring in vain. The Italians stood four-square against blandishments, as they had formerly done against threats.

In Istria, as in all the « unredeemed » territories, the political and social life was steeped in irredentism; in the provincial Diet, in the Municipalities and other autonomous bodies, in the workmens' association, in the literary and athletic clubs, in every centre and on every occasion the desire for liberation found expression. Let anyone consult the proceedings of the Diet for the last fifty years; he will find abundant proof of patriotic spirit and firm resistance to every oppressive measure of Austria. For example: —

In 1861 the Diet was invited to nominate two deputies and two proxies to the Council of the Empire; the voting was not only negative in result, but the majority of the voting papers had *Nobody* written on them. At the same session, having to send a dutiful message to the Emperor, the Diet determined to send only a memorial of the wishes and the needs of the population, leaving out the customary expressions of homage and gratitude. For answer the Diet was dissolved.

But not only representative bodies; the whole people were like minded. The ferment reached its height (with demonstrations, trials, imprisonments) in 1878, when the occupation of Bosnia gave rise to hopes of Italy's intervention, and since then the movement has never hung fire. Ragosa, the companion of Oberdan in the attempt

of 1882, was an Istrian, and many Istrians have crossed to Italy to avoid persecution, or after experience of an Austrian prison. The Press also has always faithfully voiced the feeling of the people. All the journals that have been issued at various epochs in Istria, from the « Porta Orientale » of Carlo Combi to the « Unione Nazionale », organ of the national-liberal party, — all have preached irredentism, having to suffer many sequestrations and legal proceedings in consequence.

The great Italians of the Risorgimento have always been had in reverence by the people. They tell how one day the Arch-Duke Francis Ferdinand, the ferocious hater of the Italians, entered a shop at Parenzo to buy some illustrated post-cards. Finding only cards with portraits of the King and Queen of Italy, of Garibaldi, of Mazzini, of Cavour and other great Italians, while there were none of the Emperor of Austria and the Imperial family, he expressed his surprise in disgusted tone to the keeper of the shop. The good woman ingenuously replied: « But, Sir, nobody buys those others ».

One day the Governor of Trieste was paying a visit to the President of the Chamber of Commerce of Istria. Finding portraits of the King and other notable Italians on the walls, he had the bad taste to express his surprise. To this his host

brusquely answered: « At my office I am President of the Chamber of Commerce; in my own house I am free to do as I will ».

The dynastic sentiment, which is in Austria the symbol of the State idea, has never penetrated the consciousness of the Istrian people. At all Austrian patriotic festivals the people were always conspicuous by their absence, and attempts to effect a change failed. Thus, on the occasion of the Emperor's birth-day, the authorities tried to promote a general illumination, which had previously been confined to the Government offices. So by circular all the State employés were ordered to put lights in their windows, in the hope that other people would follow suit. The employés had to obey, but the blackness of the other houses only made the contrast more marked. This was the end of birth-day illuminations.

Between the soldiers of the garrison (nearly always of different nationality) and the citizens there was no love lost, and serious conflicts at times occurred. The young men loathed their military service, giving vent to their feelings in topical songs. When in barracks their rebellion sometimes took energetic forms, as when, in Pola barracks, a bust of the Emperor was found lying on the ground with a rope round its neck. Desertions, also during the present war, were very fre-

quent, and often daring, — as the crossing of the Adriatic in frail skiffs.

Very different was the fascination which Italian happenings had for the people; very different were their sympathies for Italy. They were proud of showing this sympathy. A marguerite (the flower which bears the name of the Queen-Mother), a bunch of flowers or a ribbon in the three Italian colours, was flaunted as a symbol of Italianism, despite police regulations. Names of the Kings or of great Italians of the Risorgimento, were given in baptism; racing yachts and gigs bore the names of Italian cities or of famous battles; small things in themselves but showing how the wind was blowing.

The Istrians desired to be represented at all the great Italian national solemnities: at the marriage of Prince Humbert with Margaret of Savoy, when they joined in the address of the «unredeemed» to Victor Emanuel; at the obsequies of the Father of his Country; at the death of King Humbert; at the national pilgrimage to the grave of Garibaldi. When the King visited Udine in 1903 many Istrians (Triestini also) repaired thither to do him homage, and that Istria might be always represented at patriotic solemnities, sent to Rome a richly-worked banner of the province.

When Italians distinguished in the political or literary world came to visit Istria, they were festively received, their presence giving occasion to enthusiastic manifestations of patriotism. Assuredly Gabriele D'Annunzio and other illustrious Italians, are not likely to soon forget their hearty reception by the Istrians. For many the visit must have been a revelation; for all it was a convincing proof of the high civilization of the Istrians, and their devotion to the Mother Country.

Many other facts of a similar nature might be recorded, but we must hasten to speak of the *Lega Nazionale* (the National League), an organisation where patriotic sentiment has found most noble expression. For the authorities the « National League » was a scholastic association which unfolded its activities within the limits of the law; for the Istrians it had a much deeper significance. The League not only furthered their ideals by increasing the number of Italian schools; it was a centre of thought and action for all the brothers of the regions « unredeemed ». It was more than an association; it was a symbol; it penetrated the national consciousness, attracting to itself the thoughts and affections of all. To be a member of the League (and who was not?) proved one's patriotism; to help its funds was the obvious duty of an Italian. Thus every glad or sorrowful occa-

sion in life was recorded by a gift to the League; young people often gave up to it their small savings. All the Italian Municipalities made it a charge on their annual balance-sheet, and the most important corporations subscribed handsomely to its funds. But most significant of all, also from the political point of view, were the popular festivals of the League organized every year by special committees, which were independent of the Association itself, to avoid conflicts with the authorities. In Istria *every city and town and village* had its annual festival for the League, when sums of money were collected and national sentiment was strengthened in the name of the League.

Above all things else, the war gives the best proof of the political sentiments of the Istrians. When hostilities broke out with Serbia, and Austria mobilized, she acted as though certain that Italy would aid her; but the «unredeemed» had no illusions. They knew Italy would never turn her back on her great past and join the side of the oppressor. But many anxious days were spent before the declaration of neutrality; when that came people breathed more freely, knowing that Italy's entrance into the conflict was not far distant. Out of the European conflagration the Istrians hoped to secure their longed-for redemp-

tion. While awaiting Italy's action those young men who had not been taken in the first hasty mobilisation, crossed the frontier to hold themselves in readiness; soon these volunteers were numbered by thousands. Committees were formed at Trieste and other places to futher their flight, and other committees in Italy provided for their needs. The young men were followed by whole families, who left for Italy to avoid certain persecution; these exiles numbered many thousands.

When Italy declared war the ferocity of the police broke out without limit; prosecutions, arrests, deportations began the very day hostilities were declared. Many hundreds were placed in concentration camps. Later, under pretence of the military defence of Pola, orders were given for the evacuation of the vast territory stretching to the Leme and comprising, besides Pola, the populous cities of Rovigno and Dignano, with various smaller centres; the inhabitants were put in barracks erected for their reception.

The Diet was dissolved; also the Junta; Government functionaries took over the management of the affairs of the province. The more important Literary and Athletic Societies were dissolved and their funds sequestrated. Proceedings were begun (the accusation was high treason) against all who had fled the country, and their goods and pos-

sessions were confiscated: the families of those who had fled, were subjected to much vexatious treatment.

But these trials did not shake the faith of the Istrians. While those left behind supported with constant mind ferocious persecution, the young men were bravely fighting alongside the soldiers of Italy. Istrians formed no small part of the « unredeemed » volunteers, and many have fallen in battle.

VI.

THE RIGHT AND THE DUTY OF ITALY.

The publicist Belcredi, recording his impressions of a visit to Istria in 1895, commenced with these words used by Cavallotti at Rome not long before: « God protect Istria », and applied them as follows: —

« Cavallotti is wrong. I, who have had the good fortune to visit this marvellous country, to have seen all Istria, passing from city to city, from hamlet to hamlet, by the sea-coast and landward too, — I see that Istria is protected by something better than the infinite goodness of God; she is protected by the manly virtues of her sons, by the constant vigilance of this people so little known that they deem themselves forgotten by their brethren, but none the less are resolved to assert their own rights of race and nationality ».

Belcredi spoke truth. Only the firm will to live explains how the Istrians have so long baf-

fled the evil arts of the Austrian Government. Alone, without possibility of help from their blood-brothers, surrounded by a thousand snares, neglected and thwarted in every way by Austria, they owe all to themselves, their moral force and lofty spirit of sacrifice. And now that, in this decisive moment of history, this people demand a hearing for their aspirations, and affirm their right to be conjoined to the Mother Country, there is none that can in honesty oppose them. If Italy, for historic and national reasons, for geographical reasons, for reasons that concern her necessary defence, aspire to the possession of Istria which once was hers. — for the dominion of a stranger which has lasted for little more than a hundred years, cannot destroy the national character of the country, — this her aspiration is seconded by the will of a people which has been consistently expressed and in a way that admits of no doubt.

But, say our opponents, even admitting the strength of these reasons, the fact remains that the statistics of Istria give a very large number of Slavs alongside of the 150,000 native Italians. Ah, yes; the statistics! It is in truth a very ingenious theory, to take account only of the number of the population when judging of the national character of a country, without having regard to

other elements which, at every epoch and among every people, have been given their due weight. And all these elements in a preponderating degree, favour the Italian claim. The Austrian Government itself admits this. In fact Austria, which now proclaims through her agents that Istria is Slav territory, was of a far different opinion in the past. And that not of her own good will, we may well believe, but because the facts did not admit any other conclusion. It was certainly not for a Slav Istria that Austria has recognised since 1815 the absolute predominance of the Italian language in the law-courts, and has, until a score of years ago, used that language as the one language in which the business of the Government offices should be conducted. Not truly from respect to a Slav Istria has she, in her own despite, also in connection with the last electoral reform of which we have spoken, had to recognise the preponderance of the Italians in the administrative representation of the province. Nor, had Istria been Slav, would she have had recourse to those artificial or violent methods (some of which we have alluded to) needed to de-nationalize the country. Nor, had Istria been Slav, would an official journal, the *Osservatore Triestino*, have written these significant words, (No. 19; Feb. 1848): —

« Istria is a country little known in Italy, and yet it is Italian by geographical position, by language, by customs, by memories, by longings ».

And later on (No. 4; June 1848), to allay the agitation caused by revolutionary movements at Venice, the official journal already cited published the following « sincere and affectionate » words: —

« ... those have served, and serve, Austria badly who write and speak as if Istria were not an Italian province, and study to repress there sympathies that are natural, necessary, most sacred. These persons we call ignorant and malignant, but none the less our *rôle* must be the same as theirs; to show, that is, that Istria could not be detached from Trieste and Austria without coming into very evil case. The Italians of Istria have always had an Italian education; the dearest dream of their youth has been to see *that nation to which it is their glory to belong* rising to its former greatness. Is he not a fool, who imagines that they will renounce their dearest and most sacred aspirations? ».

In view of such facts, how can it be honestly maintained that Istria is not Italian simply because a very large number of Slavs are to be found there, — a number artificially increased in recent years? No one has ever denied the existence

of Slavs in Istria, but no one can deny, at the same time, that language statistics, specially in Austria, a country of many nationalities, have only a relative value; — in Austria, where such statistics, instead of being a mirror of the truth, have always been doctored in the interests of de-nationalization. Only thus can one explain the amazing fall in the number of the Italians of Dalmatia in the course of a few short years. Only thus can it have happened, — to cite some examples from Istria alone, — that in the district of Pisino the census of 1890 records 3269 Italians, while the census of 1910 records only 1636; that the Italians of the district of Pinguente, from 5672 (census of 1880) have fallen to 900 (census of 1910). For it is well known that no epidemic has carried them off in the interval.

It was enough for a name to have a Slav ending in order to classify the owner as Slav; this happened often among the peasantry, ignorant of the significance of what was being written down about them. The greatness of this abuse is proved by the fact that, following on a protest of the magistracy of Trieste against the results of the census of 1910, the Central Commission of Statistics, free from all suspicion of sympathy for the Istrians, had to admit that the returns were falsified. How otherwise, indeed, can one

explain the increase of the Slavs in Istria according to the Austrian census? Thus, the census of the province of Istria for 1900 gave 141,765 Croats; and 46,421 Slovenes; that of 1910 gives 167,966 Croats and 55,407 Slovenes. Such an increase in ten years cannot be put down solely to the birth-rate, while during that period it has been proved that many Slavs with their families moved from Istria to Trieste and Fiume, attracted by better wages. The census must be false, or the increase must be due to the artificial importation of Slav elements, which, it is notorious, has been common of recent years.

Another fact must be taken into account. Austria, making of Istria, for her own ends, a province by itself, cut off the city of Trieste, the city which has belonged to the province from pre-Roman days. Therefore, when summing up the Italians of the province, one should add in fairness those of Trieste, about 150,000; to these should be joined the 50,000 Italians (about) of the Kingdom of Italy, established for several generations at Trieste and in Istria.

But leaving these mystifications, often employed by those who are enthusiastic for a Slav Istria, let us ask: What is the Slav contribution to the civility and the culture of the country? What was, until recently, the extent of their po-

litical power? And that power, of which to-day they boast themselves, by what means have they gained it? What part had they in creating that which Istria had, and has, of greatness, of beauty, of utility? Is it not Italian life that pulses through every fibre of the country, the fascination of which draws the very Slavs themselves?

Awkard questions these for our opponents, but very simply answered from the facts we have brought forward. Austria, while recognising all these facts, had she succeeded in creating the Yugoslav State she dreamed of, intended to include therein, by a simple stroke of the pen, Istria and Trieste. But now the free peoples have to judge and to decide. The answer awaited in firm faith by the Italians will certainly be given according to equity and justice.

Besides the ideal aims which she shared with her Allies, Italy entered the war with a definite programme: to free her « unredeemed » children and to gain her natural frontiers on the Tridentine and Julian Alps, with a strategic position on the Adriatic that would secure her supremacy on that sea. As the possession of Istria is indispensable that she may secure her eastern frontier, whose lines have been drawn by nature and by the course of history, and as the dominion over that deeply indented coast, with the wonderful

port of Pola and the islands of the Quarnaro, is necessary to establish her defensive position on the Adriatic, so is it legitimate for her to seek to free from a strange yoke the noble-hearted children of that land which is hers.

If, in carrying out this programme, she must absorb a certain Slav population that has established itself there at various epochs, that does not diminish her just claims. National boundaries cannot be marked by a line that coincides with the linguistic boundaries, specially where the tongues have become mixed together through time. Mountains are the true confines of nations; and this indelible sign, along with others, shows that Istria belongs to Italy. In occupying Istria, therefore, Italy is not invading foreign territory, but reclaiming a country that is her own. Nor can the presence of other peoples, even though as numerous as Austrian statistics would have us believe, change the true state of the case.

And it cannot be pretended that the Slavs, the great majority of them, will have ground of complaint. The Slavs of Istria, — we speak of those (and they are a multitude) who have not been influenced by the propaganda of recent years, — are, and feel themselves to be, Istrians above all. To the agitators who shouted: « Viva Croazia », they answered: « Viva Istria ». As they

have been faithful friends of the Italians in the past so will they be in the future, as they see the advantages flowing to them from harmoniously living together. As they were good Istrians they will be good Italians also. The others, free to return to their own country if they will (specially the recent immigrants, who have no real interest in Istria), will adapt themselves without difficulty, when the artificial agitation which has made them hostile has ceased, and when by the traditional liberality of Italy their legitimate needs are fairly met.

It is asserted in many quarters (and this would seem to be the meaning of the pact of Corfu between representatives of Serbia and exiled Jugoslavs) that the South Slavs wish complete separation from Austria and the formation of one independent Yugoslav State, captained by Serbia. We have no positive data for judging whether this is really the will of many Jugoslavs remaining in Austria; but it may be that the new horizons opened by the war, and above all the infamous manner in which Austria has rewarded their devotion, may urge them to seek national unity and independence by another road. If this should be the result, Italy will only have cause to rejoice. Apart from the advantage arising from the dismemberment of Austria, she would find

in the new State a natural ally against the common enemy, and common interests would create a neighbourly relationship and a good understanding.

It would be out of place, however, to speak of renunciations that might hurt the supreme interests of Italy. It is not for us to judge what concessions might be agreed on in the common interest; at least it would be unjust to expect and unfair to grant anything that would prejudice the legitimate aspirations of the «unredeemed» Italians.

Let it be noted meantime that, notwithstanding expressions of good will to Italy by the Slavs, they have not yet abandoned their ideas of conquest. By long and grievous experience the Istrians know the insatiability and the political megalomania of the Slavs. On this path, certainly, Italy has no intention of following them: that would be, not only to forswear the noble aims which drove her into the war, but would fatally prejudice the supreme interests of the defence, the liberty, the future prosperity of the Nation.

With a faith undiminished by time, and by many bitter delusions, the Istrians have awaited the day of their redemption. Unspeakable sacrifices, bitterest struggles they have cheerfully en-

dured to prepare the advent of that day and to render themselves worthy of it. Italy, who has given for them the blood of so many of her sons, cannot let that blood be as water spilt on the ground; she must demand that these her oppressed ones go free.

At a memorable sitting of the Istrian Diet, which was one philippic against the Austrian Government, one deputy closed an impassioned appeal as follows: —

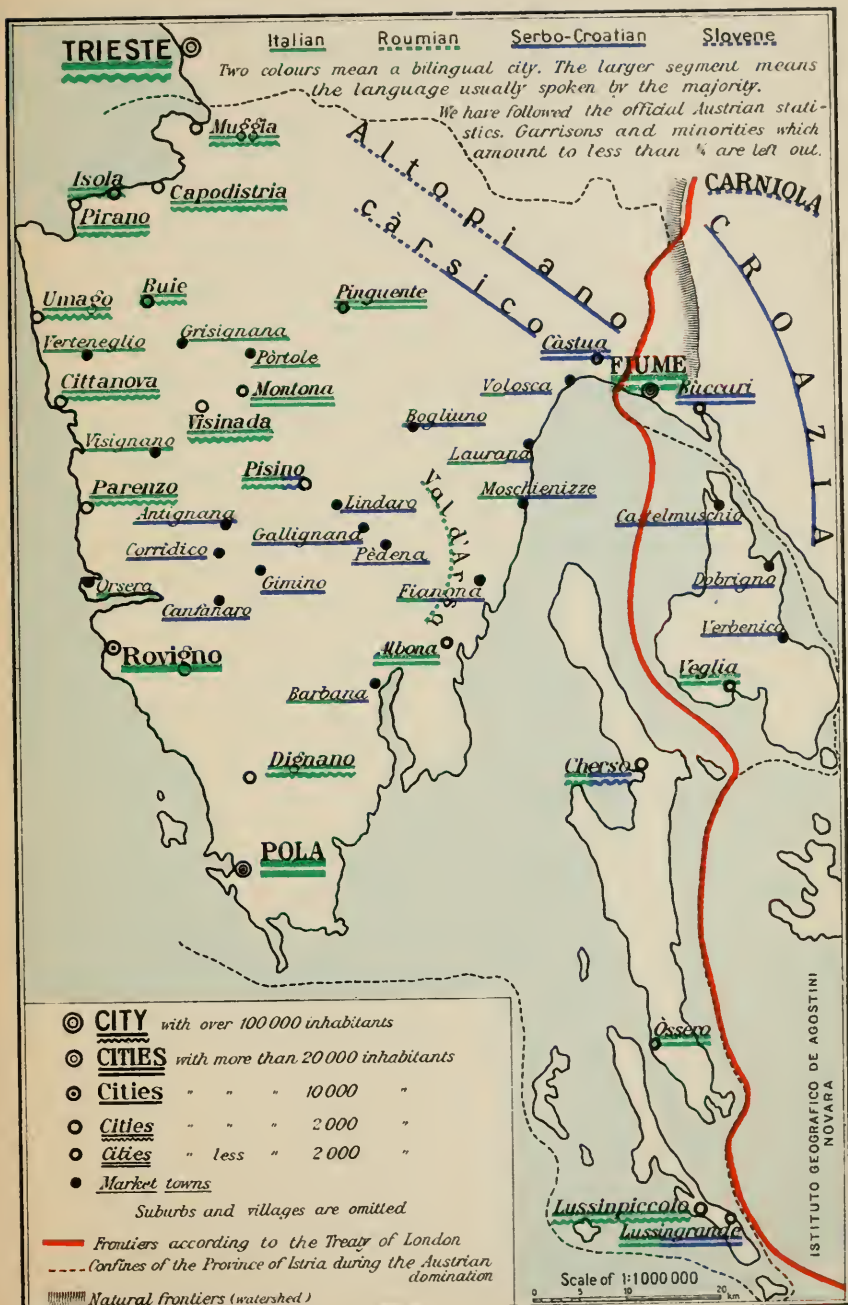
« Your acts of violence will not bend us: your threats do not make us afraid. Behind us are thirty million Italians, who, you may be well assured, will never suffer the undaunted cohort that keeps guard at Italy's eastern gate, to be brought to confusion ».

The time to make these words good has come.

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